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FOR DRL/MLGA LYNN SICADE AND IO/RHS AMY OSTERMEIER, ALSO
FOR EAP

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA DISAPPOINTED US WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN
UNHRC

REF: STATE 61034

¶1. (SBU) The Government of Australia (GOA) expressed its disappointment that the USG will no longer participate in Human Rights Council (HRC) sessions or activities. Poloff met with Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) Director of Human Rights Section Colin Milner who said Australia shares the same concerns over the politicization and ineffectiveness of the HRC and is concerned about the effect of US withdrawal. At the same time, however, Australia will continue its participation.

¶2. (SBU) Milner stated the GOA would like to see increased participation by the U.S., and would have supported the U.S. seeking a seat on the HRC. He said the GOA felt the two countries have similar and supporting goals for the HRC and that by choosing not to participate, the U.S. risked weakening the Council even further, especially in the short term. Milner reiterated Australia understand and shared our concerns about the state of the Council and accepted with regret the decision of the USG.

¶3. (SBU) Milner described this as a point where our paths diverge: where a government either chooses to attempt reform from within, or leaves and hopes the message is heard and sparks the desired results. He said Australia hopes this is not a sign that the U.S. is scaling back its participation in multilateral fora. Poloff gave assurance the USG will intensify its engagement on human rights promotion and protection in other multilateral venues, especially the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.

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